



# ELSAH HISTORY

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## Some of What Helen Remembers

*By Helen Sprague of Beaufort, MO—a long-time member of HEF*

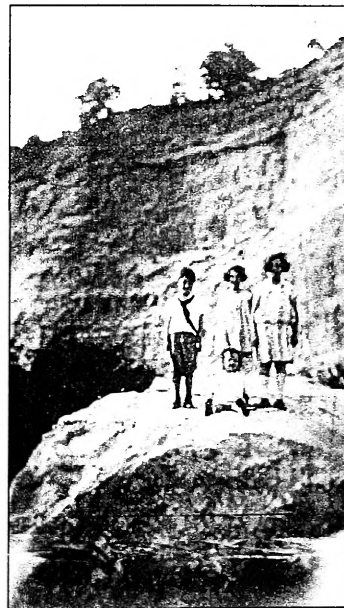
As far back as I can remember Elsay has been a part of my life. Now, the last one of “those Spragues,” I’m finding evidence that the family was busy around Elsay well before I came along. In an old album there is a picture of Mother walking along the railroad track near Elsay with two little ones—my sister Florence and brother Warren—toddlers. It was about 1923. Chautauqua was much visited by St. Louis people, coming up by train to escape the big city. Chautauqua had its attractions, but Elsay was to become quite special to the Sprague family.

Below:  
Mrs. Sprague with two of her children  
—Florence and Warren—around 1923

Middle:  
Betty and Florence near the old footbridge  
in front of the Methodist Church

Right:  
Warren, Florence, Betty, and Helen Sprague  
at the Elsay quarry

Photos courtesy of Helen Sprague



My early memories are full of “kid” kind of messing around—building dams in the creeks, climbing up into the old quarry, getting a drink out of the spring in the park, listening to tales told by older and wiser people—some of which we believed. (One fellow tried to tell us that a riverboat had made the hole in the

side of the old brick Odd Fellows building down by the river. But it was, to us, sort of obvious that there had been a door there.) We roasted hot dogs and marshmallows along the riverbank, skipping rocks into the sunset. Of course, this was well before the Alton dam or River Road.

In the early years we often stayed at Miss Mary Hughes’ home [11 LaSalle St.]. She was kind, though a bit forbearing to a 5-year-old. There were Bible verses posted on every wall. One rainy spring we arrived for our second visit and saw a poem about the “mud daubers” along with the Bible quotations. Mother groaned a

bit, and at the end of that visit, she put us into the car and went back inside the house. She wanted to see if any more mud had been daubed and to clean it up, before we left for home.

Miss Hughes exemplified the kind of woman who would call her home "The Bible House." And she gave us the opportunity to help others, too. During the Great Depression, at her request, we went

down among the shanties along the St. Louis riverfront—where the Arch is now—to find a family she had invited to come up to Elsah for a visit.



"In the early years we often stayed at Miss Mary Hughes' home... 'The Bible House.'"

"The Bible House" in the 1930s

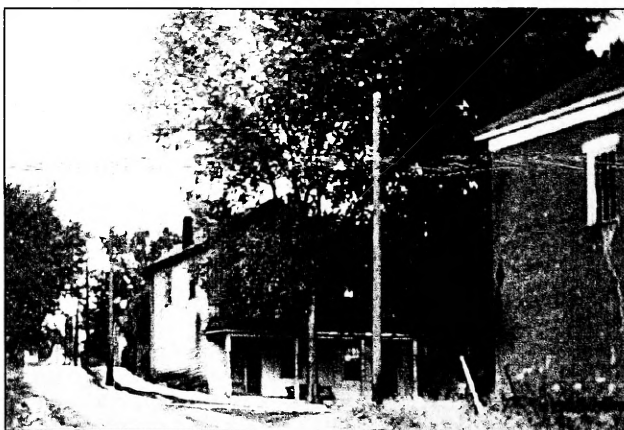
HEF files

Sometimes, when staying at Miss Hughes', we ate at the Riverview House, then run by Marie Cresswell's grandmother Catherine Allen Cresswell. In those days they took in itinerant salesmen and served great meals. One time, a fellow came in for dinner while we were eating. Usually, as kids, we would eat and get on back outdoors. This time I hung around because my brother Warren was hanging around. Warren had noticed that this fellow was a pretty finicky eater. He kept saying that he "couldn't eat" this or that. Dad and the salesman had a lengthy exchange of stories. The grown-up talk was not necessarily of interest to kids, but this time Warren kept hanging around. When the lemon pie was served, the salesman was much pleased. "My favorite," he said. Warren groaned, got up and stomped out. He had been counting on that piece of pie.

"Sometimes...we ate at the Riverview House, then run by Marie Cresswell's grandmother...."

Riverview House and the Odd Fellows Hall (IOOF) in the late 1930s

HEF files



The Sprague kids got to know and be known around the village. We frequented both grocery stores. From the view of this once little girl, Spatz's was dark, with old men sitting around a stove. We heard tales about early days, such as why the railroad bed had been started along the side of the hill, and then stopped. And about the tunnel that didn't go very far. Eventually we explored that unfinished tunnel.



"...Spatz's was dark, with old men sitting around a stove."

Left: Mrs. Spatz and her son

Below: The "Hot Stove League" at Spatz's Store



Keller's store welcomed little kids. They had those yard-long licorice sticks—bought with one's "hard-earned" pennies. They also had a porch out back, where we enjoyed "ice cream sodas" on hot summer evenings. The ice cream of one's choice was put in a glass. With thumb in place on the open top, a soda bottle was given a great shake. Then the soda was squirted into the ice cream. Depending on the technique of the shaker, size of the thumb, exuberance of the crowd, etc, the ceiling might get sprayed with orange soda. My dad was an expert—particularly at getting everyone excited. The Kellers were patient with the hilarity—and the mess.

By the way, there seemed to be no Republicans and Democrats at that time in Elsah. Instead, there were those that dealt with the Kellers and those that dealt with the Spatzes. That's just the way it was!

Over the years my reputation held up longer than the licorice sticks did. Well into my college years, I could walk into

the store and be presented with a stick without asking—though licorice sticks did get shorter. Years later (some time during the 1960s), returning from living on one coast or another, I came in the store with a friend. Eddie Keller was busy with some customers. I took a look around. Things had changed somewhat. There wasn't any orange soda stain on the porch ceiling. Gradually Eddie moved around, helping the customers. When they left, in greeting he presented me with my stick of licorice. Old habits stay with us all.

Thinking back, it's not so surprising that he remembered me. I was there when adventure almost became disaster. It happened on a summer evening. Our parents were having a pleasant visit with Miss Hughes, out in front of her house, toward the river. Back behind, in the house sometimes known as the Apocrypha, a group of young people were into their own evening, playing a game. (I was the youngest.) This involved drawing cards to set up vari-

ous roles in the "murder mystery," which was perpetrated in the dark. Teenagers present included my sisters Betty and Florence, and their friend Betsy. They had played the game in the city, with some hilarity, as well as with electricity. All was well for the first few turns. However, we were using a kerosene lamp. There was an unplanned inadvertency. In an effort to turn the lamp off, Warren somehow dropped the hot chimney, which of course broke into many pieces. It was, of course, the property of Miss Hughes. The chimney had, of course, been obtained at Keller's Store—hardware division. And wasn't it convenient, of course, that one of the players happened to be the young Eddie Keller! Again without the benefit of electricity, "the group" was still able to get another chimney for the lamp, from the store. A happy ending, of course!

Our family adventures were not restricted to the village. In 1925 the Sprague family acquired the property on the hill west of Elsah that had be-

longed to the poet and painter Frederick Oakes Sylvester. Some 15 years earlier, Sylvester, a teacher at Principia in St. Louis, had introduced the school to Elsah by taking students there. That same year, 1925, Clark-Sprague Printing Company, my father's company, published the Second Edition of Sylvester's book, *THE GREAT RIVER*, with a preface written by Mary Kimball Morgan, founder of The Principia. (Also of some little note, that's the year the fourth Sprague child arrived.)

We camped out up there at times, and certainly tramped around on those hills, which Sylvester had written about.

At the top of the hill was the old Piasa Bluffs Hotel. Built in 1890, it was pretty much in ruins, as I remember it. The caretaker, Mr. Gilbreth, was sort of "scary" to this little girl. My dad was able to talk pleasantly with most anyone, whether they liked it or not. So we did get to look and poke around a bit in the old hotel, picking up menus, cream pitchers, and a bit of a nature display from the hotel desk—some bird eggs and a turtle shell, as I remember.

Mr. Gilbreth also "stood guard" on the other side of the village at a small house on the way up the hill to where the college is now. But when Principia acquired that prop-

erty, we had easier access to the whole area. Then we were able to follow the "five miles of tree-lined driveways" on the campus. We went to the cottage (where the chapel now stands), well decorated with the bric-a-brac of the 1880s, by walking up the hill along a cement sidewalk. With family and friends we had a big picnic around the ruins of the old stone building Notchcliff. We explored along the hills west of Eliestoun and found grave-stones from the town of Eminence. That year was 1932. One headstone in the cemetery said 1832. I'd just learned in school that George Washington was born in 1732, so I liked the coincidence.

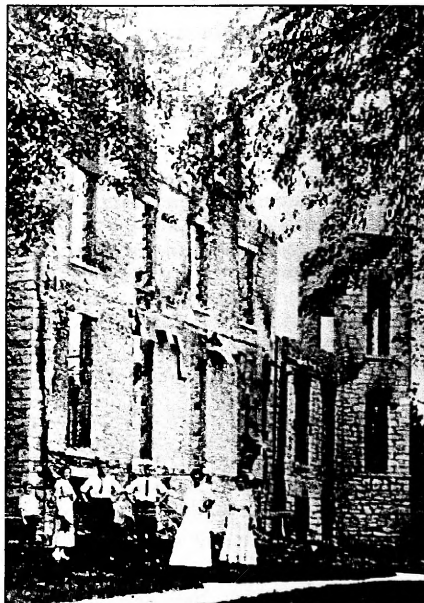
Below: "We went to the cottage (where the chapel now stands)...by walking up the hill along a cement sidewalk."

Used with permission of The Principia

Right: "With family and friends we had a big picnic around the ruins of the old stone building Notchcliff."

—A group (not the Spragues) partying at Notchcliff ruins, 1911

HEf files



On a Friday evening one fall, immediately after Warren was out of a Cub Scout meeting in St. Louis, the family rushed off to Elsah. There was a full moon. Dad wanted us all to enjoy a special evening with the poems of Sylvester—right on his place. We certainly did, even though we needed a flashlight for the lines of some poems. The Sylvester painting "Enchanted Twilight" well typifies that evening.

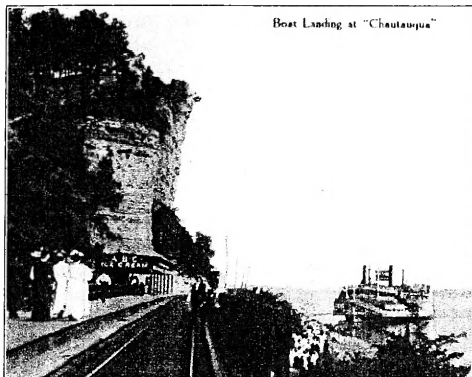
As I remember, Elsah celebrated special days in the park—Fourth of July, Labor Day. Different groups would have booths—with good food, of course. The local celebrity was Dewey McDow, the remaining veteran of "The Great War."

Not to be outdone by Chautauqua, where they had movies, swimming, and nature clubs for children, Elsie had a traveling Magic Show one time. It was in what is now known as Farley's Music Hall. (It was known by another name at that point—Knights of Pythias.) Local residents were joined by visitors from some distance, who had come to see Elsie, the place where Principia College was to locate. Being then a little kid, and there was quite a crowd, I got to sit on the knee of some newspaper writer from Boston.

Even more exciting was when the Show Boat came. This was also in the early '30s. The boat tied up at Chautauqua one night and moved on down to Elsie the second night. There hadn't been anything like this for years, evidently. Our family went both nights for the entertainment. The Chautauqua crowd seemed to be more acquainted with what audiences had learned to do up and down that river. They booed the villain and cheered the hero at the appropriate times. The Elsie people did not seem to be acquainted with the tradition. No boat had stopped here, at least not since that old hotel had closed. But my Dad made the traditional sounds and shocked the audience. I was most embarrassed.

"The [Show] boat tied up at Chautauqua one night and moved on down to Elsie the second night."

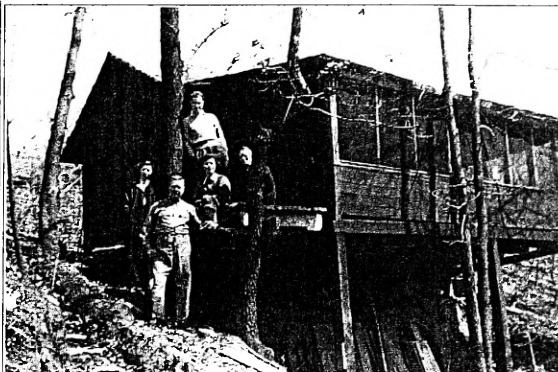
HEF files



"A few years later, about 1935, we started our own building project...a cabin on our own property."

Florence, Warren Sr., Helen, and March (Mrs. Sprague); Warren Jr. standing in back—Spring 1943

Photo from Helen Sprague



Spring, summer and fall we'd "go up to Elsie"—rain or shine. When my big sisters got on into high school, they would remark: "Well, if we're going let's hurry before it rains, so the neighbors won't think we're nuts!"

By then we weren't the only ones going to Elsie. Principia's new picnic grounds, built on the site of the old hotel, were popular with those interested in getting acquainted with Elsie and surroundings. More people were staying overnight at the Apocrypha. Some folks bought and renovated houses.

Much construction was going on up at the new campus. Principia had to send out a

letter to parents: "Please don't let your children walk on the beams of the new buildings." (Guess who did that. I'd forgotten about that incident, until I came across the letter in the accumulation of family papers.)

A few years later, about 1935, we started our own building project. Years before, we had drawn floor plans—some quite elaborate, as I remember. (One of my plans, sketched on a brown newspaper wrapper, had Warren's room right in the middle of the house.) This was to be a father and son project—building a cabin on our own property. Dad had numerous conferences with a carpenter friend. Supplies and

lumber were delivered. Mother and I ended up carrying much of the lumber up over the hill while the fellows got the big oak beams in place. Driving nails into oak involved soap and more strength than I had, so carrying stuff was about all I got to do. Somehow I don't remember the sisters being involved until the cabin was usable.

We enjoyed our cabin for some years. Mother and I spent a few long winter nights there, with the double-decked bed pulled over in front of the fire. One time, with weakening batteries in our portable radio, we listened to the war start in August of 1939.

POSTLUDE: by Helen Sprague:

As a Freshman in Principia College, I lived in the village for a while, with my sister Florence, in the house next to the Holts' [5 Mill St.]. Florence had a job taking care of the electricity—almost nil. I took care of the plumbing and heating—strictly primitive. We walked and/or hitched a ride up to the campus. And were frozen out before Christmas. As a Senior, I did practice teaching in the Elsay School—with the same plan for transportation. Eventually, I have had the opportunity of building my own house, doing much more than dragging the lumber over the hill.

## WORKSHOP ON HISTORIC ZONING

By John W. Williams, HEF President

On Saturday, November 3, 2001, Historic Elsay Foundation and the Village of Elsay co-sponsored a three-hour workshop on historic zoning. The featured speakers were Catherine O'Connor, Local Government Services Manager of the Preservation Services Division of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA), and James Sinclair, attorney for the Village of Elsay. Among the participants were Marjorie Doerr, Mayor of Elsay; Jane Pfeifer, just-retired Mayor; Eric Schreiber, Chair of the Zoning Board; members of the Zoning and Historic Elsay Foundation boards; and other village residents.

Elsah has two types of zoning laws. The first regulates land use and is typical of almost every zoning or land use law in the state. However, not every jurisdiction, such as Jersey County, has such zoning. It is not unusual to see an auto junkyard next to a nice estate house out in the county. The second type of zoning, which is more rare though not unique, aims to preserve the historic character of a town or neighborhood. Elsay, according to Ms. O'Connor, has one of the strictest historic preservation zoning ordinances in the state.

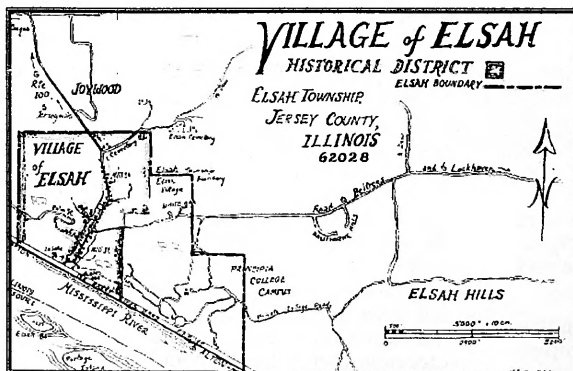
### Land use zoning

Traditional land use ordinances are found throughout the United States. Although each has unique features and differences, the ordinances

are aimed at bringing compatible uses together and reducing "externalities." According to Mr. Sinclair, externalities are the unintended and sometimes harmful impact that one type of land use can have on a different type of land use. Perhaps the most controversial example of this problem in recent Illinois politics is the siting of corporate hog farms near residential communities and water supplies. The hog operations produce powerful and noxious odors, potentially driving down property values of nearby residential land. The waste from the operations, if not properly managed, can seep into groundwater and water supplies. Land use zoning tries to prevent incompatible uses from intermixing.

Elsah's land use zoning ordinance provides three categories of uses: residential, business, and public/cultural. The residential category has three subcategories, reflecting the density of the use (from single-family to multi-family). The business category has two subcategories, reflecting different types of businesses. Larger communities, such as Jerseyville, Godfrey, and Alton, have more categories and subcategories, including industrial or manufacturing uses.

Elsah's ordinance covers the entire "corporate boundaries" of the village. Even the parts of Principia College which are inside the village are included.



Zoning Ordinance

Basically, land use zoning freezes land use at the time the zoning is established. Any subsequent use of the land within each category must be consistent with that category. Pre-existing uses that are not consistent are allowed to continue as "non-conforming uses." We sometimes call this "grandfathering." Under the Elsay ordinance, a non-conforming use "runs with the land." It is allowed to continue even though the land is sold to a subsequent owner. Non-conforming uses are "extinguished" if the use "lapses for two years." In other words, if there is a two-year break from the original use, the land reverts to the zoning category.

Riverview House, the first building we see when we come into Elsay from the River Road, was a retail establishment for many years. For a while it was an antique store. This use predated zoning, which placed Riverview House in an R-1, single-family, residential district. Since the building has not been used as a retail business for more than two years, it has lost its right to a non-conforming use.

Each category of zoning—residential, business, public/cultural—has two types of uses: permitted and special uses. The permitted uses of each category are logical—living in the residential areas, doing business in the business areas. The permitted uses are rights that we have by owning land in the various zones. The Elsay zoning ordinance lists under each category "special uses" that may be allowed within each zone. These special uses are not rights, but privileges, which must be sought through the Zoning Board. Special uses often come with restrictions, such as time limits. One example of a special use in a residen-

tial zone is a home occupation, where one has a business in the home.

Owners can seek, through the Zoning Board, a variation or variance. A variation runs with the land and is granted because of unique or unusual circumstances that make adherence to the ordinance difficult or impossible. Jim Sinclair could only remember one instance of a variation in Elsay, needed because of the topography of the ground.

The last alternative in zoning is to seek rezoning. Since zoning is done by ordinance, rezoning is a process of amending the zoning ordinance, which requires action of the Village Board. One of the elements of any zoning ordinance is the initial creation of the zoning map, designating the various zones and categories. The map is part of the zoning ordinance. Thus, rezoning means re-drawing the map, which means amending the ordinance.

#### Historic preservation ordinance

Jim Sinclair emphatically distinguished the zoning (or land use) ordinance from the historic preservation ordinance. The latter statute, promulgated by the village in 1987, does not relate to the use of the land or buildings, but to the external character of the buildings. The ordinance, according to Catherine O'Connor, could be one of the toughest preservation laws in Illinois.

Mr. Sinclair took the audience through key portions of the historic preservation ordinance. He began with Section One, which outlines the purpose of the law. It is reproduced in the accompanying box. Mr. Sinclair highlighted the word "alteration" in Subsection b. The word, he noted, means any change.

#### Section One. Purpose of Ordinance.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community as follows:

- a. To provide a mechanism to identify and preserve the distinctive historic, architectural, and/or landscaping characteristics of Elsay which represent elements of the Village's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history and character;
- b. To balance and improve the interests of residents, homeowners and businesses by assuring that alteration of any improvements is performed in a manner that is consistent with the Village's historic and architectural character, and to protect past and future investments by residents, property owners and businesses;
- c. To stabilize and improve property values within Historic Elsay;
- d. To create an atmosphere and character consistent with the historic development of the Village;
- e. To foster civic understanding and pride in Elsay's history and architecture;
- f. To foster and encourage preservation, restoration and rehabilitation.



*Section Two* defines over twenty key terms, including alteration, construction, demolition, and repair. Mr. Sinclair noted that some of these terms have broad definitions. The ordinance applies to "exterior architectural appearance," which does not extend to the interior of the buildings. The law covers "erection, construction, reconstruction, removal of any structure, or excavation on any property." In order to pursue any changes, the owner must get permission of the Zoning Board in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness. Repairs which do not change a structure but only bring it back to its original condition do not need permission.

The historic preservation ordinance, as designated in *Section Three*, applies only throughout a portion of the village specifically called "Historic Elsah." The area, generally being the hollow, is indicated by a map, reproduced in this newsletter. The historic preservation ordinance does not apply to those parts of Elsah outside "Historic Elsah," such as the Principia College campus.

*Section Four* sets forth the process for review of an application for construction, removal, alteration, or demolition. Subsection c of *Section Four* provides detailed criteria to guide the Zoning Board in its review of each application.

The first of the criteria stipulates that all property "will retain, insofar as possible, an exterior architectural appearance appropriate to the prevailing historical architecture." New construction or any alteration shall have "essentially the same exterior architectural appearance" as the original structure on the same site or "a subsequent historic structure that contributed to the historic character of the Village."

The second item urges the maintenance of "significant original qualities" of a property, which includes structures and landscaping. Removal or alteration of historic or distinctive features should be avoided.

The third urges compatibility of construction, alteration, or repair with Elsah's original architectural style. The fourth urges compatibility with regard to "general design, arrangement, scale, texture or materials." Criterion five emphasizes consideration of construction with regard to other structures and features, including streets and alleyways.

Item six includes ten elements that must guide construction, alteration or demolition. These elements acknowledge the uniqueness of Elsah's historic and architectural development. For example, element (b) states that each property has its own unique history. A structure should not be

altered to reflect a time period which has no historical basis in that structure. This element attempts to counter the "Williamsburg effect," in which every building is altered to a specific and narrow period in history, whether the building ever looked that way or not.

Another element under the sixth criterion recognizes that almost every building in the village has gone through a series of changes: "These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected."

A key element of criterion six describes the process of "repair." It encourages repair over replacement, but, "in the event replacement is necessary, the new material need not be identical." However, it "should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture...." Repair or replacement of missing features must be based on substantiated historic, physical, or pictorial evidence, "rather than on conjectural designs."

Other elements urge the protection of archaeological resources, encourage surface cleaning by "the gentlest means possible," and discourage excessive illumination. This list is not exhaustive.

In the absence of satisfactory information about previous historic structures, contemporary design for new construction, alteration or addition is not prohibited. However, the criterion requires compatibility in size, scale, material, and character.

The last subsection guides the review process, which specifically addresses new construction. "New construction shall duplicate as nearly as possible the exterior architectural appearance of the last documented historic structure located on the site."

#### **Administration and enforcement of historic preservation**

One of Catherine O'Connor's duties with the IHPA is to manage the State's Certified Local Government (CLG) program. Illinois communities that meet minimum standards of the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service can apply for such status. One of the requirements is the adoption and enforcement of an historic preservation ordinance. Local preservation programs that meet the federal standards are certified by the State. Failure to enforce historic preservation can result in loss of CLG status.

CLG status gives communities the opportunity to participate in state and federal preservation activities and to be eligible for matching grants. CLG grants can be used for three activities: surveys, design reviews, and public education. Ms. O'Connor noted the HEF publications as exam-

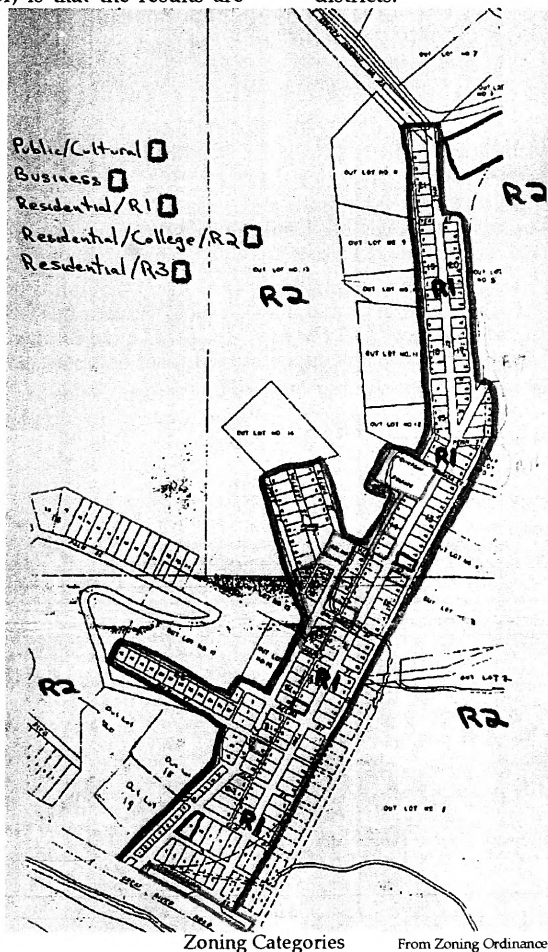


ples of surveys of historic properties. Jane Pfeifer noted that much work has already been completed toward a design review of the village. Ms. O'Connor shared examples of public education programs, including brochures, publications, and lending library ideas. As she emphasized, Elsay could lose these benefits if the Village failed to enforce its historic preservation ordinance.

Ms. O'Connor appeared cognizant of the tension in Elsay between community preservation and economic development. She provided copies of several articles and referred to the work of Donovan Rypkema. Mr. Rypkema has conducted research for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and written on the subject of the economic effects of rehabilitation and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. His conclusion, according to Ms. O'Connor, is that the results are

ambiguous. Other researchers are less ambiguous, arguing that historic preservation may be the best, most cost effective form of economic development. This argument is consistent with the State's aggressive efforts to develop heritage tourism.

Jane Pfeifer spoke briefly about her role as a citizen member of the state panel that reviews applications for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. This federal program is administered through State Historic Preservation Offices. The panel meets four times each year to consider applications which have already gone through a thorough review by the IHPA National Register and Survey staff. There are over 1,300 historic and pre-historic places with National Register status in Illinois, including 153 historic districts.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

March 28, 2002:

We want to thank the Foundation for printing such a fine newsletter [Spring 2002], so informative to those of us living in Elsah and those of us who are concerned with the future of Elsah.

The article regarding the surveys (official or non-official) was very much appreciated as it shows that people have definite feelings for our quaint village.

BRAVO to HEF! Even though HEF did not conduct the survey, you realize the service you are doing for the community by publishing it in your newsletter. Lesser organizations would have overlooked the significance of a local survey.

Thanks for supporting the villagers."

Carolyn & Bob Ruland

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March 27, 2002:

I just read the Spring issue of 'Elsah History' and want to compliment you on a very interesting issue....

Lorraine Passmore  
[Liberty Corner, NJ]

## IN MEMORIAM?

by Gretchen Batz --9/15/02



One of the older residents in Elsah [the tree in front of Riverview House] has been put on trial. This harmless creature has survived numerous floods; the chemical-laced river; coal, barge, and refinery smog; strong windstorms, and seasonal extremes in temperature. In return, it has harmed nothing and no one.

For decades it has greeted strangers and community members as they enter Elsah. It surely has hosted hundreds of birds and insects over the years...and maybe even a skink or tree frog or two.... The rest of the time it has stood there with strength, grace, and beauty. Its leaves have clapped countless rhythms in gentle breezes and fierce thunderstorms. They still quake and shimmer with vibrant joy.

Oh Cottonwood tree! How magnificent you are! Why would anyone want to kill you? What crimes have you committed? Being too large? Not earning your keep? Obstructing the local economy? Redirecting traffic flow? Inconveniencing human beings and their vehicles?

Will anyone speak in your defense? Will anyone miss you? Does anyone really care? WHO ARE YOUR FRIENDS? Will they do all they can to protect your right to continue to live your life to the fullest...?

## VILLAGE HAPPENINGS

### Flash Flood on Mother's Day:

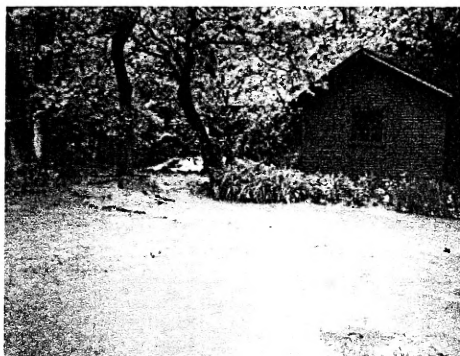
On May 13<sup>th</sup> Elsah experienced something even the "old-timers" cannot remember happening—a flash flood to end all. Eleanor Barnal recalled one around 50 years ago, but "this was worse because of the mud."

The ground was saturated with spring rains, and on that Sunday a long downpour caused the creeks to overflow and rush down each street like a river.

Water (& mud) entered Eleanor Barnal's basement (140 Mill) and ruined her car. The Mitchell's

basement at 90 Mill had 4 feet of water. Linda Bohaker saw her car fill with water; it was parked on the north side of her home at 69 Mill. Water shot like a cannon through the culvert behind the Lewitz home (66 Mill) and surrounded the house (see picture). The bridge in the park was damaged enough that it had to be dismantled; the play equipment there still tilts a bit. The fence between the park and Gil Ives' home (59 Mill) washed away. Mary Tober, next door, asked her mother where the trash can was, and her mother responded, "I think I saw it go down that way." It

ended up on the other side of Farley's. Muddy water rushed into the Haslam basement, the Taetz barn & kitchen, Farley's, the Green Tree Inn, some houses on Valley Street, on & on. Part of the concrete wall next to Randy Kinder's home (44 Mill) was undercut and toppled over, and the picket fence on top of the wall landed in the field beyond. At least 15 feet of ground under the Mill St. sidewalk by Killions' (near the 4-way stop) washed away and has finally been filled in to make it safe. There is still gravel covering the lawn at Sandy Stack's former home (17 Valley). Robert Pennamon and his daughter videotaped what they witnessed of the event from their window at 2 Palm St. Almost everyone has a story to tell.



Left:  
Water pouring from the culvert behind 66 Mill Street—filling the back yard and driveway and surrounding the house.



Right:  
Mill Street, looking north from near the 4-way stop, shortly after the water receded. Ed Lewitz is standing in mud, and the sidewalk is covered with mud.

Photos by J. Lewitz

## Elsah Museum:

**"Threads of the Past" exhibit:** In celebration of the State of Illinois' Family Heritage Days, our museum held a special exhibit on two weekends in late June. The *Jersey County Star* in its July 3<sup>rd</sup> edition described it as "a community exhibit of loaned textiles [including some early-19<sup>th</sup>-century quilts],...also a community sewing circle during the first weekend. Demonstrators were present to show their skills and answer questions." Among HEF members who participated were: Carol Stookey, Betty Clark, Marge Doerr, and Judy Williams. Jane Pfeifer was at the heart of the activity.

**Photo contest:** From July 18<sup>th</sup> to Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> the Museum displayed photographs on the theme "Connections with the Past." This was the third annual exhibit and featured a \$150 purchase prize. Robert Graul of Alton judged the winner to be Errol Campbell's "Elsah Gateway Circa 1950." Inge Mack's "Upper 18 LaSalle 1966" received special recognition. Jim Schmidt, Marge Doerr and Jane Pfeifer are to be thanked especially for their work on this project.

## New QEM Firehouse:

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> the Quarry/Elsah/Mississippi Fire Protection District and Lewis & Clark Community College dedicated the large new fire station and training tower out at the corner of Route 3 and the Elsalh Road. QEM secretary/treasurer David Pfeifer, one of the speakers at the ceremony, has been working diligently on this project for a long time.

Elsah's former firehouse has been turned over to the Village and will house the police car, museum items not on exhibit, the Gaar-Scott engine, and a desk for the Jersey County Sheriff's Department.

### Follow-up on "Reinvent the front of Elsah?":

The Village Board met Tuesday, October 8, 2002. On the agenda was the topic "Changes to front of village."

The Mayor acknowledged the many letters sent in from all over the country, even internationally, some of which were in response to the recent issue of *Elsah History*. The letters expressed concern about the proposed changes at the entrance to Elsah. Board members had copies of the correspondence. The Mayor has composed a letter and sent it to all who wrote in, assuring them that the Board is not planning to encourage commercialization of Elsah that would change it forever.

The Mayor also referred to a petition signed by over 150 people. The petition asked the Village Board either to abandon the proposal to gravel

the slough area for cars and large tourist buses or take no action until there is a village referendum on the proposal. After much discussion, the Board voted to improve the existing boat landing area to accommodate a maximum of two buses, subsequent to having the attorney develop an ordinance regulating buses within the village.

The Board took no action on the proposal to decrease the size of the median in front of Riverview House, pending a written report from tree experts on whether the large old tree can remain. And they took no action on the viewing platform.

This means that there should be little change to the appearance of the entrance to the village at this time.

### *UPCOMING (OR JUST PAST!) HEF ACTIVITIES - Mark your calendar.*

#### **AT FARLEY'S—"FABULOUS FRIDAY" LECTURES (\$5 donation for each):**

Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>: Charles Hosmer-narrated slide show on Eliestoun (to be followed at a future time with a tour of the mansion—for members only)

Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>: Mike Rechin, Principia Professor of Biology and Natural Resources, on "The Mighty Muscels of the Muddy Mississippi"

Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>: Janis Treworgy, Principia Associate Professor of Earth Science, on "Woolly Mammoth Unearthed," the on-going dig at Principia (to be followed at a future time with a tour of the dig—for members only)

#### **AT THE MUSEUM:**

Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>: Annual Bake Sale (the Museum's only fund-raiser)

**WELCOME...** to Cory Baker--Alpa St. apt; Ann & Keith Pierson & their 2 children--10 Valley; Heidi & Chris Snow & daughter--117 Mill; Amy Trevelyan & her daughter--17 Valley; and Donna Wilson & family--90 Mill (the "Swiss chalet")

**and FAREWELL...** to Bruno David--Alpa St. apt.; Virginia & Gary Mitchell--90 Mill; the Spencers--117 Mill; Sandy Stack--17 Valley (though she's nearby); and Whitney & Todd Wedding--10 Valley

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